

Step Two: Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Spiritual Principal of Step Two: Hope

“If a mere code of morals or a better philosophy of life were sufficient to overcome alcoholism, many of us would have recovered long ago. But we found that such codes and philosophies did not save us, no matter how hard we tried. We could wish to be moral, we could wish to be philosophically comforted, in fact, we could wish these things with all our might, but the needed power wasn’t there. Our human resources, as marshaled by the will, were not sufficient; they failed utterly.”

“Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a power greater than ourselves.” (Big Book, 44-45)

“We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commence to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power, which is God.”

“Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another’s conception of God. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect a contact with Him. As soon as we admitted the possible existence of a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction, provided we took other simple steps. We found that God does not make too hard terms with those who seek Him. To us, the Realm of Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. It is open, we believe, to all...” (Big Book, 46)

“Most emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honesty facing his problems in the light of our experience can recover, provided he does not close his mind to all spiritual concepts. He can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial.”

We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. Willingness, honesty, and open-mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.” (Big Book, Appendix II. “Spiritual Experience,” 568)

“When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. This applies, too, to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book. Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you. At the start, this was all we needed to commence spiritual growth, to effect our first conscious relation with God as we understood Him. Afterward, we found ourselves accepting many things

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which then seemed entirely out of reach. That was growth, but if we wished to grow we had to begin somewhere. So, we used our own conception, however limited it was.”

“We need to ask ourselves but one short question. ‘Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?’ As soon as a man can say that he does believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built.” (Big Book, 47)

Have you surrendered? And how does this express itself in your daily life?

In what ways have behavior and thinking been “insane” in relation to alcohol/drugs? In what ways has my behavior and thinking been “insane” in relation to other areas of my life?

What would being “restored to sanity” mean to you in practical terms? Please explain.

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Do you now believe, or are you at least willing to believe, that a Power greater than yourself can restore you to sanity? And do you believe this power will help you? Please explain.

How do you define a Power greater than yourself, as you understand it/him/her? Has your idea of God as you understand it/Him/her changed over time? It is different now than it was when you were a child or teenager? Please explain.

Is either fear, anger, or resentments towards God (and/or organized religion) preventing you from believing in a power greater than yourself? Please be specific. (Here are some potential examples.)

“I believe in God, but I fear that I’m undeserving of God’s help because...”

“I resent God, because of my own experience with organized religion...”

“I am angry at God, for abandoning me when...”

If you have been, or still are, angry at and resentful towards God (and/or organized religion), how have these feelings manifested themselves in your behavior? (Intolerance towards religion/religious people, slander, avoidance, etc.?) Please give specific examples.

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Practical Tip: If you are having difficulty envisioning a loving God of your own understanding, then draw a line down the middle of a lined piece of paper. On the left side, list all of your negative perceptions about what God is. If you don't have any such preconceived ideas, then just leave this side blank. On the right side list, write down what you want God to be for you (a kind, loving, caring forgiving force for good, etc.) When you are done, simply tear the piece of paper down the middle and then throw away the left side. You are now left with a God of your understanding; one that will always love, forgive, and help you – in sum, “a God that could and would if sought.”

The Step 2 Promises:

“There is a solution.” (Big Book, 25)

“The great fact is just this, and nothing less: That we have had a deep and effective spiritual experience which have revolutionized our whole attitude towards life, toward our fellows and toward God's universe.” (Big Book, 25)

“He [God] has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves.” (Big Book, 25)

“They [members of Alcoholics Anonymous] declare that since they have come to believe in a power greater than themselves...there has been a revolutionary change in their way of living and thinking. In the face of collapse and despair, in the face of the total failure of their human resources, they found that a new power, peace, happiness, and sense of direction flowed into them.” (Big Book, 50)

“Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but he [God] was there. He [God] was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that he [God] may be found.” (Big Book, 55)

“God has restored us all to our right minds.” (Big Book, 57)

Additional Reading:

Big Book. “WE AGNOSTICS,” 44-57.

Big Book. Appendix II. “Spiritual Experience,” 567-568.

Alcoholics Anonymous. *Came to Believe*. (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2002)

The Little Red Book. (Center City, MN: Hazeldon Foundation, 1986) 23-31.

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Before You Move on to Step Three, Are You Convinced...

- (a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.
- (c) That God could and would if he were sought.

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